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ABSTRACT

The digest explores aspects of serving the learning disabled (LD) student in vocational education classrooms. It is noted that LD students may have difficulty following directions and understanding lectures and may forget more often than other students. A list of seven accommodations that can be made for LD students in vocational classrooms includes providing extra time to substitute for writing or copying, finding alternative ways to acquire written information, supplying a list of new terms to be studied before class, speaking slowly and clearly in well organized lectures, permitting the use of calculators or other concrete aids, and helping them organize their thoughts by "thinking aloud." The digest asserts that many LD students can successfully complete vocational education classes. A listing of resources and references on the topic concludes the digest. (CL)

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1984
DIGEST

SERVING THE LD STUDENT IN A VOCATIONAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM

WHAT DIFFICULTIES DO LEARNING DISABLED STUDENTS FACE IN A VOCATIONAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM?

They may have difficulty with academic tasks such as reading and writing. Following directions and understanding lectures could be hard for them. As a general rule, they forget more often than other students. They may learn how to sand wood one day, but not know how to do it the next day. In class, they may appear restless and not pay attention. Sometimes they will fail to focus on their task.

In *Puzzled About Educating Special Needs Students*, Lloyd Tindall describes a typical learning disabled student:

> We are in a vocational agriculture classroom in late March as the instructor explains how to prepare a corn-planter for spring planting. A complanter from one of the student's farms is in the shop awaiting preparation.
>
> The instructor asks the class to read a section of the cornplanter manual silently. Tom reads for about a minute and then starts bothering the student next to him. After being asked to continue reading, Tom reads for another 30 seconds and again bothers his neighboring classmates. The instructor asks the students to list the necessary tasks on paper. Tom has trouble listing the essential tasks. He cannot identify the essential tasks to be performed. His thinking appears to be disorganized. His handwriting is poor. Some of his letters are reversed: a "b" replaces a "d". He has skipped words. We also observe that Tom is easily distracted by noises outside the classroom. He does not seem to have the ability to tune out even minor distractions.
>
> When dismissed to go to the shop to perform the tasks, Tom appears to be clumsy and awkward. He exhibits poor coordination, especially for a student in the 12th grade. After arriving in shop, Tom cannot remember his task. He is to grease all the zerks on the cornplanter. He does not remember where the grease gun is located or how to fill the grease gun.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE ACCOMMODATIONS MADE FOR LEARNING DISABLED STUDENTS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION CLASSES?

1. Some learning disabled students need extra time to practice on the equipment. They may need a lighter workload to have more time free for homework. If a student needs more individual instruction than others, consider hiring a teacher's aid, finding a volunteer in the community, or asking one of your better students to provide tutoring, or permitting students to work in a small group to complete the project.

2. Some learning disabled students have difficulty writing. It may be hard for them to take notes or to copy from a blackboard due to visual-motor problems. They may want to tape the class, borrow another student's notes, or have another student copy notes for them using carbon paper. Oral reports can be substituted for written papers, and tests can be given orally.

3. If students have difficulty reading, the special education department of your school may be able to help them. Until their reading level is raised, they can be taught through lectures, demonstrations, listening to tapes, or asking another student to read to them.

4. Students with language difficulty will be helped by being provided a list of new terms to be studied before class. They may need to learn how to listen. They may not understand the meanings of gestures or differences in tone of voice or speed of delivery. Explain these to them. Help them to separate vital points from unimportant ones. Provide a study sheet listing important facts of the content under study.

5. An organized, well delivered lecture will help your entire class, especially your LD students. Speak slowly and clearly. Carefully pronounce new words and ask students to repeat them. Emphasize your main points. Encourage students to ask questions or ask the teacher to repeat if they do not un-

EC180909

derstand. Begin the lecture by reviewing the learnings of the previous day, and end with a summary of the important points.

6. Students having difficulty in math may need calculators or other concrete aids.

7. Many LD people have difficulty thinking in a logical way and completing their thoughts. Just as they have difficulty paying attention to the outside world, they have difficulty following their own thoughts. How can you help them organize? Listen to them think aloud. For example, you can ask them to describe an object or process they have just seen or used. Give them tasks that make them organize: Ask them to organize their notes, organize their work area, and/or even to plan something for the class.

IS IT POSSIBLE FOR LEARNING DISABLED PEOPLE TO SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION CLASSES?

Yes, many learning disabled people are intelligent, coordinated, and sociable. Each learning disabled person has unique strengths and weaknesses. People with learning disabilities can develop good study habits which make them good students. They must make an extra effort to overcome their handicap. This extra effort can make them valued employees.

REFERENCES

Tindall, L. W. *Puzzled About Educating Social Needs Students? A Handbook on Modifying Vocational Curricula for Handicapped Students*. Wisconsin Vocational Studies Center, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1980. 79–134.

RESOURCES

Available from the Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091:

Career and Vocational Education in Special Education, (1983), a special focus issue of *TEACHING Exceptional Children, 15*, 4. ($3.50)

- A Curriculum-Based Approach to Vocational Assessment, R. Brian Cobb, 216–219.
- Directions for the 80's: Vocational Preparation for Secondary Mildly Handicapped Students, Susan Brody-Hasazi, George Salembier, and Kathleen Finck, 206–205.
- It's Elementary! Career Education Activities for Mildly Handicapped Students, Pamela Gillett, 199–205.

Learning Disabled Adolescents: Programs, Curriculum Teaching Methods, No. 507. A computer search reprint of 100 abstracts, 1983. ($10.00)

Life Centered Career Education: A Competency Based Approach (Revised Edition), Donn E. Brolin, Editor. (1983). Provides activities for infusing curriculum with 102 specific competencies in areas of Daily Living Skills, Personal Social Skills, and Occupational Guidance and Preparation. Includes assessment and IEP planning forms. Revised introduction and resource sections. Up to date references and list of publishers. 160pp. ISBN 0-86586-049. ($15.25)

Transition from School to Work for Handicapped Young People, No. 533. A computer search reprint of 65 abstracts, 1984. ($10.00)

Career Exploration and Preparation for the Special Needs Learner, Allen L. Phelps, and Ronald Lutz. (1977). Allyn and Bacon, 470 Atlantic Ave., Boston, MA 02210.

Employability Skills for the Special Needs Learner, Jerry Wircenski. (1982). Aspen, 1600 Research Blvd., Rockville, MD 20850.

Prevocational and Vocational Education for Special Needs Youth, A Blueprint for the 1980s, Kevin P. Lynch, William E. Kiernan and Jack A. Stark. (1982). Paul H. Brooks Publishing Co., P.O. Box 10624, Baltimore. 305pp.

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